

Comments from Livable Mountain View on Plan Bay Area RHNA numbers

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Thu 11/12/2020 10:04 AM

To: Regional Housing Need Allocation <rhna@bayareametro.gov>

Cc: louise katz [REDACTED]

External Email

Members of the Regional Planning Committee of the Association of Bay Area Governments,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the setting of the RHNA numbers for Bay Area next RHNA cycle.

It has come to our attention that due to the recent pre-COVID-19 housing affordability crisis, ABAG has deemed it appropriate to greatly increase the RHNA allocations for cities in this area to multiples of the numbers that were required in the previous eight year cycle. While we acknowledge that this may have been worthy of serious consideration before the COVID-19 crisis, we believe that the changes in the way that technology companies are doing business merits reconsideration of this push to greatly up-zone our Bay area communities. In particular:

1. The COVID-19 crisis has taught our technology companies that remote work is not only possible but productive. Technology leaders like Google are now seriously considering that a hybrid work from home and remote work environment for their employees will be the best way to move forward after the COVID-19 crisis is completed. (Reference 1) Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has predicted that as many as half of his company's employees could shift to remote work in the next 5-10 years. (Reference 2) The Bay Area now leads the USA as the area with the largest excess of sub-leasable office space. (Reference 3)
2. Meanwhile, as tech workers exit the Bay Area, the demand for apartments has plummeted. In Mountain View, for example, rents for single bedroom apartments have fallen 38% since last year, while rents for two-bedroom apartments have fallen 32%. (Reference 4). All of this is happening while new apartment complexes, the construction of which began before COVID-19, comprising thousands of new units are being built. This will further depress rents once these new units come online in 1-2 years. (Reference 5)

When and how to up-zone of our communities is one that should be undertaken with careful consideration of current and potential future market conditions. Once a city up-zones an area, it could be subject to lawsuits from landowners who perceive a subsequent downzoning as a "taking" of property rights. We therefore recommend that ABAG Regional Planning Committee proceed cautiously and delay the implementation of its proposed RHNA increases until the aftereffects of the COVID-19 crisis can be evaluated effectively.

Finally, we find no addendum in the attachments which documents the cost and weighs the ability of Mountain View to provide needed infrastructure to support such a massive up-zoning. This includes additional school facilities, the capacity and delivery of water, sewers, and increased police and fire protection. Mountain View is a city of only 13 square miles and is being asked to re-zone to grow 50% in the next 8 years. All this at a time when its population is substantially decreasing.

Thank you for your consideration in this important matter.

Robert Cox and Louise Katz

For the Steering Committee of Livable Mountain View

<https://www.livablemv.org/>

Disclaimers:

Livable Mountain View is an independent Mountain View organization not directly affiliated with Livable California.

Robert Cox is the Chair of Mountain View's Environmental Planning Commission and is a co-author of this letter as a member of Livable Mountain View Steering Committee. He is not speaking officially on behalf of the

Commission in this letter.

References:

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